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ABSTRACT

Demographic characteristics and attitudes of Asian-American undergraduates at the University of Maryland, College Park, were studied. A random sample of 139 Asian-American students responded to a 51-item questionnaire, with a return rate of 81 percent. Seventy-five percent of the 86 male and 53 female respondents had resided for the longest period of time in the Mid-Atlantic States, and 85 percent reported having grown up in neighborhoods where the racial composition was less than 25 percent their race. Respondents in the fields of arts and humanities, social sciences, and general sciences (39 percent of the sample) perceived more differential treatment due to racial background than did students in mathematics, physical sciences and engineering, agriculture, and allied health (54 percent of the sample). Those respondents whose fathers, grandfathers, or great-grandfathers were the first generation to be born in the United States tended to experience feelings of racial conspicuousness less strongly than respondents who were first-generation Americans (about 50 percent of the respondents) or were in a family with no one born in the United States. Despite findings of racial isolation of the respondents, six factors suggest the continuing importance of Asian values: interracial contact, differential treatment at the university toward minority group students in general and Asian students in particular, seeing hard work and perseverance as important to success, awareness of racial conspicuousness in group and individual situations, inhibition of self-expression in public, and familial responsibility to bring honor to the family name. (SW)

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College Park, Maryland

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE MELTING POT: ASIAN-AMERICAN UNDERGRADUATES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK

Lydia Yuriko Minatoya and William E. Sedlacek

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This paper has been identified by a joint project of The Institute on Desegregation at North Carolina Central University and ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at George Washington University. The purposes of this project are to identify, collect, and make available literature concerned with

(1) the problems of minority students in higher education in general and
(2) the problems of desegregation in historically black colleges and universities in particular.

New published and unpublished materials are reviewed and recommended by participants of the Institute on Desegratation's Interinstitutional Research Group (ID/IRG) for acquisition by ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education. An annual bibliography of this material will be published under the names of ERIC and the Institute.

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Lydia Yuriko Minatoya and William E. Sedlacek

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SUMMARY

This study sought to examine how Asian-Americans experience their racial visibility in a geographic region where the concept of racial differences is largely dichotomized as a black-white issue. The purpose of the study was to describe Asian-Americans in terms of demographics and attitudes, and also, through factor analysis, to identify some dimensions along which the respondents' attitudes might be measured in subsequent investigations.

A random sample of 139 Asian-American undergraduates at the University of Maryland, College Park, responded to a 51-item questionnaire with a return rate of 81%. The results suggest that the respondents have spent most of their lives on the east coast, in urban areas, and have had very little contact with other members of their racial group. Despite this racial isolation, the six factors which emerged suggested the continuing importance of Asian values. Implications for the development of mental health services were discussed.

A popular view of Asian-Americans has been that cultural values such as educational achievement, diligence, and cooperation have assisted the group's assimilation into the mainstream of the American reward system, and that the group is an American "melting pot" prototype. An analysis of current stereotypes revealed that Asian-Americans are seen as hard working, model citizens (Sue and Kitano, 1973). Yet perhaps this view of Asian-Americans has impeded the diagnosis of needs and the development and delivery of services to this group.

The growing recognition of minority rights has prompted social scientists to re-examine the "model minority" assumption. Studies now indicate that Asian-American college students tend to experience a higher tendency towards apprehension, tension and introversion than their white classmates. Asian-Americans also have been found to experience many special concerns such as greater pressure to excel academically, retarded verbal skills, and restricted vocational choices (Onoda, 1977; Sue and Kirk, 1975). After gaining marginal acceptance through achievement and stoicism, Asian-Americans may be more suceptible to feelings of personal inadequacy, guilt, and fear of jeopardizing their group's security when they fail (Lyman in Tachiki, Wong, Odo & Wong, 1971). Quite possibly they also find themselves alienated from other minorities who resent the implication that, to be acceptable, they must model themselves after Asian-Americans. Therefore, Asian-Americans find themselves in a paradoxical situation where certain behaviors are simultaneously encouraged and devalued.

Despite these pressures, studies have indicated that Asian-Americans utilize services for mental health at a low rate (Sue & McKinney, 1975). Investigators have suggested that Asian cultural values such as self-control,

inconspicuousness and stoicism affect utilization of services, since admission of problems would be perceived as reflecting poorly on the individual, the family and the group (Kitano, 1976; Sue and McKinney, 1975; Sue and Sue in Tachiki et al., 1971). Other researchers see a parallel problem existing as well. That is, not only do Asian values hinder the seeking of help, but also the differences between Asian and Western values have limited recognition of subtle problem areas by help givers and the proffering of appropriate services (Chin, 1976; Tinloy, 1978). For example, while Western culture values autonomy, independence and assertiveness, Asians traditionally have valued belonging to a group, inconspicuousness and self-sacrifice. While in Asian society, self and social esteem are gained through accommodating others, and in turn, having one's own needs attended to by others (Kitano, 1976), in American society "you get what you ask for" by being bold and enterprising.

These Asian values manifest themselves in behaviors of cooperation and responsibility, which have contributed to the view of Asian-Americans as ideal students, employees and citizens. However, the same values also incur "benign neglect," since Western society assumes that if an individual or group has needs, the freedom to express them exists. Reticent to express their own needs, and attentive to the tacit expectation that they will not rock the boat, Asian-Americans may be confused and thwarted to find that, in America, self-sacrifice is associated less with honor than with non-recognition, ridicule or exploitation.

Perhaps one major obstacle in the identification of problem areas for Asian-Americans has been the value of deference, which is accompanied by hesitancy to speak out in meetings, acceptance of a less desired option when given a free choice, and refusal of invitations (Kitano, 1976). When coupled with the desire to maintain "face," this deference may particularly confound research which assumes that respondents value openness and will welcome

anonymous opportunities for self-disclosure and self-assertion.

Additionally, the body of research on Asian-Americans is small, and literature on Asian-Americans residing in geographic areas other than Hawaii or the west coast is virtually non-existent. As Asian-Americans become more mobile, they increasingly interact with persons predominantly outside their subgroup. However, they remain highly visible as a racial minority. It has been suggested that this often results in their experiencing conflicts of marginality (Sue and Sue, in Tachiki et al., 1971). How Asian-Americans experience their racial visibility, particularly in geographical regions in which they are clearly in the minority, is deserving of further investigation.

A recent study of problems perceived by minority students at the University of Maryland, College Park, found that, while Asian-American students perceived problems in the areas of racial discrimination, alienation, and negotiating the University system, these problems did not appear to evoke a strong sense of urgency (Webster, Sedlacek, & Miyares, 1979). Given the research on the value of deference, it is important that we continue to examine the concerns of Asian-Americans and to attempt to ascertain if our methodologies have been relevant and our investigations specific and tenacious enough.

Method

A random sample of 200 Asian-American undergraduates at the University of Maryland, College Park, was mailed an anonymous, 51-item questionnaire covering demographic information and attitudes toward education, family, inter-racial contact, and racial discrimination. Non-respondents were followed up by post-card, letter and telephone.

When contacted, eight non-respondents indicated that they were not of Asian background, twelve of the original sample of two hundred had listed their addresses as confidential and therefore were not included in the mailings, and nine others had moved without leaving forwarding addresses. Therefore, 171

subjects were contacted for inclusion in the study. Of these 171 subjects, 139 completed the questionnaire (86 males, 53 females), resulting in a return rate of 81%.

Analysis

Nominal data were summarized by frequency, percentage and chi-squares. Likert items were analyzed by analysis of variance, using independent variables of sex, University division (major field), generation, and University classification (freshman, sophomore, etc.). Principal components factor analysis with regression correlations as communality estimates was conducted. All factors with eigenvalues greater than one were rotated to a varimax solution yielding six factors which accounted for 71% of the common variance. Items with factor loadings greater than .40 were examined for analysis. All differences discussed below were at the .05 level.

Results

Most of the respondents had resided for the longest period of time in the Mid-Atlantic States (75%). Seven percent reported they had lived the longest in New England, and 6% in the Southeast. Only five percent had spent the majority of their lives in western states, and fewer than one percent were from the midwest.

Ninety percent of the subjects had spent most of their lives in cities with populations of over 100,000 or in suburbs of such areas. Yet, despite having lived largely in urban areas, 42% stated that besides their family, no one of their race resided in their neighborhood. Indeed, 85% of the respondents reported having grown up in neighborhoods where the racial composition was less than 25% their race. Similarly, 68% of the students reported having had a teacher of the same race once or never, with an additional 22% stating that they had had Asian teachers only a few times.

Fifty-four percent of the respondents had chosen majors in the fields of life sciences and agriculture, mathematics, physical sciences and engineering, or allied health. Thirty-nine percent had chosen majors in behavioral and social sciences, arts and humanities, and human and community resources (education, human ecology, etc.). Whereas 40% of the males had chosen mathematics, physical sciences and engineering as major fields, only 11% of the females had selected these fields. On the other hand, 5% of the women had chosen human and community resources as a major, and 9% of the women had chosen allied health as a major, fields which none of the men selected for their major.

Sixty-three percent of the students indicated they intend to pursue a degree beyond the bachelors, while 25% indicated their intention to pursue a doctoral or medical degree. Only three percent, however, intended to pursue a degree in law. Chi square analyses revealed that men were significantly more likely than women to aspire to a medical degree, while women were significantly more likely to seek a law degree.

Approximately half of the respondents were the first generation to have been born in the United States. Second-generation U.S. born constituted approximately 15% of the sample, and about one-quarter of the respondents stated that no one in their family had been born in the United States.

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of responses to 36 items. Students appeared to agree most strongly with items dealing with feelings of family interaction (items 1, 16, 17, 20), racial awareness (items 5,11), avenues and limitations for advancement (items 24, 25, 30). The least agreement appeared to be elicited by items dealing with close relationships with same race peers (items 3, 4), and with familial disenchantment (item 22).

Table 2 shows that men, compared to women, were less willing to verbally demonstrate competencies. Men were more sure about their life goals,

had more self confidence, felt more that hard work would be the best way for a minority group to achieve equality, but also were more likely to feel that talent doesn't mean automatic success.

Several significant differences emerged when attitudes were examined by university classification, using Analysis of Variance. Seniors were significantly less inclined than freshmen to feel that, at the University, minority students and white students were treated identically. Seniors also seemed to feel more sure of their life goals than did freshmen and sophomores. Freshmen were more apt to feel that the joys of family life are greatly overrated than were juniors.

Table 3 displays the significant differences in attitudes by major field. Respondents in the fields of arts and humanities, social sciences and general sciences perceived more differential treatment due to racial background than did students in mathematics, physical sciences and engineering, agriculture, and allied health. Those enrolled in mathematics, physical sciences and engineering , agriculture, and allied health said they were more apt to share classes with other members of their own race, and felt that savings spent on education are wisely invested.

Those whose fathers, grandfathers or greatgrandfathers were the first generation to be born in the U.S. were less inclined to agree that otherwise well-informed people seemed to know very little about their ethnic group, and more apt to agree that identifying and talking about their strengths seemed like bragging.

A total of six factors were identified which could account for 71% of the common variance. Table 4 contains the item loading highest on each of these six factors and the item loadings. When analyses of variance were conducted, findings indicated that those respondents whose fathers, grandfathers, and

great-grandfathers were the first generation to be born in the U.S. tended to experience feelings of racial conspicuousness less strongly than respondents who were the first generation born in the U.S. and those from families where no one had been born in the U.S.

When, on the maternal side, no one in the respondents' families had been born in the U.S., there was significantly more agreement that hard work and perseverence and education were important means to success. Those respondents majoring in arts and humanities, behavioral sciences, and general sciences were significantly more apt to agree with statements dealings with feelings of racial conspicuousness than were students majoring in the fields of physical sciences, agriculture, allied health and mathematics.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to describe Asian-American undergraduates in terms of demographics and attitudes. The study sought not only to determine to what extent Asian-Americans agreed or disagreed with various statements, but also to identify some dimensions along which the respondents' attitudes might be measured in subsequent investigations. The six factors which emerged represent independent dimensions that explain which items students tended to group together when responding. Beyond simply describing the attitudes of the students, the factors may therefore be seen as an initial step in the process of developing a sense of what types of issues may be cogent for Asian-American students.

Factor I labeled "interracial contact" appears to be clear cut and homogeneous. The four items shown for this factor deal with same-race peer relations in situations ranging from casual classroom contacts to marriage. Factor II appears to deal quite clearly with differential treatment at the University toward minority group students in general and Asian students in particular.

Factor III suggests that hard work and perseverence are seen as important means to success, particularly in educational behaviors. That males were significantly more likely than females to agree with items in this factor is consistent with the literature. Weiss (in Tachiki et al., 1971) has suggested that Asian-American females are ascribed a less rigid role than their brothers for carrying on traditional responsibilities and values. Males were also more likely than females to choose medicine as a vocational goal, an aspiration congruent with the popular image of the well educated, taciturn, Asian-American male. Females, however, were significantly more likely than males to choose law: a field associated with western values of verbal fluency and assertion.

Factor IV seems to relate not only to the respondents' awareness of racial conspicuousness in group and individual situations, but also to the personal cost of that conspicuousness to the respondents' spontaneity. Asian societies have tended to exercise social control through the development of a keen sense of personal humiliation for failure to maintain the family name. Therefore threat of public display of the wrongdoer's humiliation (loss of face) is a powerful inhibitor of careless action (Sue and Sue, in Tachiki et al., 1971). Students from families that had lived in the United States for several generations appeared to feel less strongly about items in this factor than did more recent immigrants. This may be attributed to the process of acculturation. That is, familiarity with negotiating a western environment may have reduced some of the sense of self-consciousness. It may also be attributed to the society's assimilation of some aspects of the cultures of earlier Asian immigrant groups. For example, Chinese cooking and Japanese Samurai are concepts familiar to large segments of the American public. The more recent immigrant groups such as the Koreans, the Vietnamese, and the Cambodians, however, may still be largely unknown and subject to a closer scrutiny. These groups may, therefore, feel more acutely the pressure to

be "ethnic ambassadors." Further investigation is needed to add clarity and depth to this factor, yet the emergence of Factor IV suggests that Asian-Americans may have internalized the expectations of others that they be representatives of their race, and that fear of blunders in that role may inhibit enjoyment of social interactions.

Similarly, Factor V deals with inhibition of self-expression in situations where there is the potential for public evaluation. This factor may be touching upon feelings associated with the value of inconspicuousness, since it seems to tap a reluctance to participate even in situations where the respondent feels competent.

Factor VI may be associated with the traditional familial responsibility to bring honor to the family name in that it appears to juxtapose the concept of family and the responsibility to "do and say the right thing at the right time."

While much of the existing literature on Asian-Americans has been gathered from Chinese-Americans and Japanese-Americans on the west coast, the present study appears to support findings which suggest the continuing importance of Asian values. This study was intended as an initial step toward understanding the experience of the Asian-American immersed in an environment where racial differences are largely dichotomized as a Black-white issue. In subsequent investigations the items need to be administered to additional samples to obtain information on the stability of the factors. Additionally, items dealing more specifically with the content which each factor seems to address need to be developed and examined. Through this process perhaps we can more confidently strive to create and evaluate services which are relevant to the needs of this paradoxically visable yet overlooked population.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Attitude Items*

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. I'd feel I was disappointing my family if I didn't finish college.	1.70	.86
2. In my classes, usually there are other members of my racial group.	2.75	1.10
3. Most of my close friends are members of my racial group.	3.48	1.27
4. Most of the people I have dated were members of my racial group.	3.56	1.30
5. When people ask "Where are you from?" I sometimes feel they really are asking "What is your national background?"	2.21	1.14
6. I sometimes find that people expect me to behave a certain way because that's how they think most people in my racial group would act.	2.89	1.24
7. I sometimes find when class or group discussion centers around my ethnic group, people seem to expect me to give an "expert's point of view."	2.62	1.00
8. I would prefer it if people thought of me as an American, rather than as an Asian-American.	3.10	1.13
9. I would prefer it if people thought of me as a Korean-American, Chinese-American, Japanese-American, etc. rather than as an Asian-American.	2.44	1.09
10. Many otherwise well-informed people seem to know very little about my ethnic group.	2.51	.94
11. It is important to be aware of one's cultural heritage.	1.68	.73
12. I would prefer to marry someone of my ethnic background.	2.61	1.07
13. At the University, minority group students are treated no differently than white students.	2.92	1.02
14. I'm more confident of my academic ability than of my ability to express myself comfortably in a group.	2.66	1.03
15. I sometimes feel too uncomfortable to participate freely in class.	2.79	1.14

Table 1 (continued)

Means and Standard Deviations for Attitude Items*

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
16. There are certain problems which should not be discussed outside one's family.	2.12	.95
17. I would willingly confide intimate matters to an appropriate person if I thought it might help me or a member of my family.	2.07	.91
18. Parents expect too much of their children.	2.82	.99
19. The more educated a person is, the better he/she is able to enjoy life.	2.77	1.17
20. One ought to discuss important plans with members of the family.	2.02	.80
21. Meeting new people is frequently embarassing.	3.66	1.04
22. The joys of family life are largely overrated.	3.43	.90
23. The University fosters respect for different cultural heritages.	2.95	.83
24. Hard work and perseverence are the best ways for a minority group to achieve equality.	2.27	.94
25. Savings spent on education are wisely invested.	1.87	.82
26. Parents are usually too old fashioned.	3.12	.90
27. It is difficult to say the right things at the right time.	2.79	.99
28. Even in a minor task, one should put all his energies into it.	2.41	.87
29. Identifying and talking about my strengths feels like bragging to me.	2.50	1.01
30. Even if one has talent and ability, it does not mean he/she will get ahead.	2.13	.94
31. Fear of social blunders prevents one from having a good time at parties.	2.77	1.08
32. One never lets him/herself down without also letting down his/her family.	3.06	1.08

Table 1 (continued)

Means and Standard Deviations for Attitude Items*

Item	Means	Standard Deviation
33. I have adequate self-confidence.	2.34	.91
34. I often feel unsure about my life goals.	2.82	1.21
35. It is easy to act naturally in a group.	2.83	1.06
36. Students of Asian descent are treated differently than white students at the University.	3.13	1.01

* Based on a five point scale, 1 = Strongly agree, 5 = Strongly disagree. All items are significant at .05, using analysis of variance.

Table 2

Significant Differences in Attitudes by Sex*

No.	Item	Male Mean	Male S.D.	Female Mean	Female S.D.
15.	I sometimes feel too uncomfortable to participate in class.	1.98	.84	2.37	1.07
29.	Identifying and talking about my strengths feels like bragging to me.	2.46	1.02	2.81	.96
20.	One ought to discuss important plans with members of the family.	1.89	.81	2.21	.74
24.	Hard work and perseverence are the best ways for a minority grou to achieve equality.	2.08	.84	2.57	1.01
30.	Even if one has talent and ability, it does not mean he/she will get ahead.	1.93	.85	2.45	.99
33.	I have adequate self-confidence.	2.21	.85	2.55	.97
34.	I often feel un re about my life goals.	3.04	1.23	2.45	1.12

* Based on a 5 point scale, 1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree. All items shown here are significant at .05, using analysis of variance.

Table 4

Largest Attitude Item Loadings on Six Factors

ITEM	FACTOR LOADING
Factor I - (Interracial contact)	
2. In my classes, usually there are other members of my racial group.	.44
3. Most of my friends are members of my racial group.	.70
4. Most of the people I have dated were members of my racial group.	.87
12. I would prefer to marry someone of my ethnic background.	.68
All items on Factor I accounted for 18% of the common variance	
Factor II - (Racial discrimination at the University)	
13. At the University, minority group students are treated no differently than white students.	.76
36. Students of Asian descent are treated differently than white students at the University.*	.67
All items on Factor II accounted for 15% of the common variance	
* Item has been reflected and sign reversed.	
Factor III - (Means of succeeding)	
24. Hard work and perseverence are the best ways for a minority group to achieve equality.	.57
25. Savings spent on education are wisely invested.	.62
All items on Factor III accounted for 14% of the common variance	
Factor IV - (Racial conspicuousness)	
6. I sometimes find that people expect me to behave a certain way because that's how they think most people in my racial group would act.	.69
7. I sometimes find, when class or group discussion centers around my ethnic group, people seem to expect me to give an "expert's point of view."	.70

Table 4 (continued)

Largest Attitude Item Loadings on Six Factors

ITEM	FACTOR LOADINGS
Factor IV - (Racial conspicuousnes) Continued	
5. When people ask "Where are you from?" I sometimes feel they are really asking "What is your national background?"	.51
10. Many otherwise well-informed people seem to know very little about my ethnic group.	.45
31. Fear of social blunders prevents one from having a good time at parties.	.40
All items on Factor IV accounted for 9% of the common variance	
Factor V - (Inhibition of self-expression)	
14. I'm more confident of my academic ability than of my ability to express myself comfortably in a group.	.89
15. I sometimes feel too uncomfortable to participate freely in class.	.53
All items in Factor V accounted for 8% of the common va.iance	
Factor VI - (Familial responsibility)	
22. The joys of family life are largely overrated.	.64
27. It is difficult to say the right things at the right time.	.60
All items in Factor VI accounted for 7% of the common variance	